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SIPDIS

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SUBJECT: ILO REGIONAL REPS REQUEST U.S. FUNDING FOR
COLOMBIA PROGRAMS

SUMMARY

11. (U) On October 26, Director of the Andean Subregional Office for the International Labor Organization J. Ricardo Hernandez met with Political Counselor to review ILO's Colombia program and solicit continued U.S. support. The program has sought to promote dialogue between enterprise and labor via international forums. The ILO is proposing four projects that promote labor rights and assist vulnerable groups, each with an estimated cost of \$1 million. Hernandez said he is seeking financing from countries that have expressed interest in promoting labor rights, and expects the ILO to schedule a donor's roundtable on the margins of the Governing Body session in November in Geneva. End Summary.

PROGRAM EXPANDS ILO ASSISTANCE TO VULNERABLE GROUPS

12. (U) Hernandez explained that the ILO has recommended a second phase to their Special Program for Colombia, which was initiated in 2003 and consisted of a series of international forums aimed at promoting dialogue between enterprise and labor. The second phase would cost \$1 million for each project over two years. The projects include:

- Strengthening worker's rights through promoting the right to organize and bargain collectively, as well as "increasing social dialogue";
- Promoting economic opportunities for women heads of household through microfinance;
- Generating opportunities for displaced and demobilized youth; and
- Strengthening local government's ability to develop employment opportunities.

13. (U) The second phase, according to Hernandez, places a new emphasis on assisting the most vulnerable subgroups of Colombian society, such as disenfranchised youth and women, while maintaining the program's focus on social dialogue and traditional labor rights. Hernandez explained that the details are in the final stages of discussion with the Ministry of Social Protection.

SOLICITING DONORS

14. (SBU) Hernandez said the ILO, with the consent of the GOC, will convene a donor's roundtable in November, inviting the United States, Germany, Canada, Norway, Sweden, Denmark, France, and Spain. He commented that during his visit to Bogota he had met with and received a positive response from the Spanish and Swedish ambassadors. Hernandez said his visit with the French Embassy resulted in a lukewarm response to the projects.

NEXT STEPS

15. (U) Rodriguez requested U.S. support for the projects and also asked that we promote them with other donor country representatives. Rodriguez said the donor's roundtable would be finalized soon. The Embassy will forward electronic copies of the ILO project proposals to WHA/AND and IO/T.
WOOD